

HAPPY FAMILY

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Preface

A detailed letter was received from a sister during the Face to Face Programme held at Kuttiadi on February 22nd 2006. The painful narration in the letter let out heartrending experiences of the writer. Her husband was working in the Gulf. He used to come back home once in two years, that too on a short spell of leave of two months. Hence she had to fight all the odds in life single handedly. She was living with the family of her husband's mother and father. Her mother-in-law was literally ruling the household. She had to serve her and the children throughout the day and night. She had to prepare not water for her bath, and wash her clothes. However promptly and nicely she did all the work, the mother-in-law used to find fault with her and reproach her. She was a healthy woman who used to perform her religious observances and duties very punctually. However, her religiosity never stood in the way of scolding the daughter-in-law. Because of the absence of her husband and the cruel treatment of the mother-in-law, she was rather pessimistic. Her letter sought answer to the question raised by her 'What should I do?'

Another sister from Malappuram talked at length on the previous day. She had given birth to a child about 25 days before. Her husband called her over phone from the Gulf and admonished and warned her severely. All these were due to the misunderstanding created by her mother-in-law and sister-in-law. This misunderstanding was so deep in the heart of her husband that whatever she told him were not heeded. He was not in a mood to listen to

what she told him. She was so overwhelmed with emotions that she was sobbing through out the conversation.

Almost all the letters and telephone calls received by us recently, told us the stories of the fall of the families. Many of them depicted the sad fate of Muslim women. Among such telephone calls or letters were of those who had to withstand the torturous behaviour of the mothers-in-law or sisters in law, or ruthlessness of their husbands. A close examination of these types of experiences suffered by women revealed that human beings have become more selfish than ever before and majority of them cannot imagine or think beyond the limits of their personal happiness. Hence they were not prepared to give up their selfish happiness even for the sake of the members of their family or nearest kith and kin. They feel that giving up even a small dose of worldly happiness for the sake of the nearest kith and kin is a great sacrifice. This may be due to the loss of humility or compassion or humaneness, which is the result of enjoying limitless pleasures in life. It is the inevitable result of the modern capitalistic life and the invasive trends which make inroads into our culture through the media.

It can be found that often the enemies of women are they themselves—they are the hunters as well as the preys. This humble book deals with some of the tearful stories of those unknown women whose sufferings never come to an end.

May God guide us to achieve our ends, and accept this as a righteous deed.

Mate and Partner

There is hardly any one who can save himself from the invasion of the commercial culture of the modern world. It commercializes every thing including human relations. Everybody takes decision after thoroughly examining the balance of profit and loss. We are in a helpless position that we cannot do anything without going through the accounts i.e. of income and expenditure, and profit and loss. We are ruled by digits; we even select our partner in life, (who must be with us through thick and thin until the end of our lives,) with a commercial attitude. Therefore, marriage has become almost a commercial venture.

The Holy Qur'an contemplates an attitude based on the emotion, love, compassion, and mercy.

'And among His signs is this, that He created for you wives from among yourselves; that you find repose in them, and He has put between you affection and mercy'. (Al-Room: 21)

Those who think have lessons in this (al-Room:21)

The word 'love' is very beautiful one. It creates interest in the heavens. All covet it. Even those who do not give love to others long for it. As pure water is

essential for retaining life, love is indispensable for enlivening social relations.

Love is the key with which the gates of human mind can be opened. Even those who cannot be conquered by sharpest weapons can be subjugated by the force of love. Love is unfathomable; it is immeasurable.

There are several things worn out by use. But love is different. If you give love, it does not get worn out; on the other hand, it increases; its increase is disproportionate to what we give. As it increases we are bound to spend more. The result is that we get boundless love.

Everybody will be prepared to sacrifice anything (in favour of) love. All efforts made in favour of being loved do not create any imbalance in anybody. It develops unlimited pleasure and ecstatic feelings in the person who gives love. Mother never complains to anybody if she has to forgo food, sleep etc. for several nights as her child is ill. When the child recovers from the illness, she enjoys the deepest pleasure and happiness.

The lovers of football matches are not bothered about whether they watch them in the day or night. They are prepared to watch the TV even in the small hours of night. Their heart beats according to the speedy movement of the ball moving from one goal post to the other. They don't feel tired even if they spend hours watching the match. They are not worried about the loss of energy or time. They are fully

satisfied and enthusiastic and excited. All these show that they are ecstatic about football match.

This is applicable to compassion also. It has unlimited strength. It is a strong link which binds the human relations. It is the purest emotion of the human mind in the absence of which the mind becomes a waste land.

According to Holy Qur'an the basis of matrimonial life should be these emotions; love and compassion. Therefore many of the criteria of the physical world are not applicable to it. The mathematical formula is that $1 + 1$ is 2. But the matrimonial life contemplated by Qur'an is different from this mathematical formula. It is a 'Big One' as imagined by Vaikom Mohammed Basheer, the great Malayalam writer.

Matrimonial life, in which two persons become united as one is a surprising process. This life becomes one single life as two rivers get together to become one big river.

Al Qur'an says:

'They are attire for you and you are the same for them.' (Al-Baqara: 187)

The terms used in our language to denote the matrimonial relation of two people are 'man' and 'wife'. But Qur'an calls them 'partners' in life.

Allah declares in Sura: Al-Nisa:

'And Allah has made for you wives of your own kind and has made for you from your wives, sons'

and grand sons and has bestowed on you good provision' (Annahal: 72)

'O Man kind, Be dutiful to your Lord who created you from a single person and from him He created his wife. From the both created many men and women.' (Al-Nisa:1)

The Holy Qur'an doesn't encourage any male domination and authority. Some people think that Man's function is to dominate, and the woman's is to obey blindly. He can think and say and do whatever he likes. She has to follow him always, and do whatever he commands without expressing her displeasure or opinion. This type of crude male domination is not accepted by the Holy Qur'an. According to Holy Qur'an man is not a ruler, nor women the ruled. They are complementary partners who share their happiness and sorrow in life. The very concept 'partner' indicates that one is not expected to rule over the other. The objectives of the matrimonial life can be fulfilled only by discharging one's duties and honouring each other's rights.

Holy Qur'an says:

"And they (women) have rights, similar to those of their husbands. But men have a degree (of responsibilities) over their wives." (Al-Baqara 228)

Not Husband; But Partner

You arrive home in the evening tired as you have been working all day; when you enter your room you find that it is full of litter. At this you can respond in several ways. One is that you can blame your wife; scold her and show up the displeasure accumulated in your mind. This approach may not influence her much. Her anger and displeasure can be seen reflected on her face. Perhaps she may express her anger, or shed a few drops of tears. However it may not affect her much.

A second response that you can adopt is that you change your dress, take the broom and brush in your hand and directly clean the room with a remark that your sweetheart mightn't found time to clean the room, and she was over burdened with chores. Perhaps she may come to you and grab the mop from your hand. Start cleaning the room expressing her grief that she failed to attend to cleaning the room. Perhaps you can say 'Doesn't matter! You may be busy with household chores! You are alone to do all these.....'

When you get back home next day, perhaps you may not find the room full of litter. Your partner is not a baby who can be changed by rough treatment.

You must know that it is through love and kindness that you can change a person.

She serves you lunch with different dishes. One of the dishes, is very hot, may be because she has put in a little more chilli. Of course one can respond to this in different ways. You can throw a sharp glance at her and say "you don't know how to prepare rice and curry, you eat it! You might have learnt cooking from your mother! But now you have excelled her!"

Just think how these remarks might pain your better half. She might have prepared that lunch in the midst of certain difficulties! Perhaps she had to look after the child also. She might not have put in an excess dose of chilli in it consciously. It might be quite accidental. How many wrong things may have occurred accidentally.

Therefore you can adopt an entirely different method. Tell your sweet heart with a smile "I used to eat lunch at different places. It seems that today the curry is a little hot. However, I haven't so far got any food more tasty than the one that you gave me. May be there was a mistake when chilli powder was put in. It is a petty thing Don't worry about it."

A woman who hears this type of remarks will naturally take a decision to be more careful about cooking food. You can not change the behaviour of your partner by finding faults with her or accusing her. You'll succeed in bringing about change in her by love and persuasion.

Suppose you were having lunch with your friend at his house and you find a long hair in the cooked food. What would you do? Would you take it out and show it to your friend and say "here is your wife's hair in the dish?" On such occasions your gentlemanliness calls for hiding it from the attention of your friend and his wife without spoiling the atmosphere of friendliness. But when you find a hair in the food your wife has cooked, you get angry with her, show it to her and express your displeasure.

You keep away that dish in which you found the hair although you had eaten the food in which you had found the other woman's hair. Many of us do not think about this type of queer behaviour of ours.

Are you a husband in the presence of your wife? Does your presence engender in your wife, fear or pleasure? Do you behave well to your wife or to your friends? The Holy prophet said: "The best of you is the one who behaves well to your wife". Please do not forget this.

Your wife may make a mistake – may be grievous or trivial one. What would you do? How would you respond? Would you pardon her on the grounds that every individual is liable to make mistakes? Would you scold her and find fault with her? As she is your partner in life, you have to forgive her and be kind. She expects kindness and compassion from you. Allah has commanded:

"Behave well to the women. If you feel displeased with them on a particular matter; you must know

that Allah might have bestowed goodness in a matter that you may hate". (Al-Nisa: 19)

Are you in the habit of blaming your wife in the presence of others, your mother, brothers and sisters? Do you scold her thwarting her self respect? Then you must understand that it motivates her to take revenge or feel dejected. She may feel that she is good for nothing and such a feeling for a continuous period actually makes her good for nothing. As you know such remarks made by you hurt her deeply and she is always affected by these remarks. You must never hurt the feelings of your wife. You have to honour her and maintain her self respect. Holy prophet once said: 'Only a gentleman respects them, a mean person insults them.'

Do you find fault with your wife in the midst of the children or show up her deficiencies and weaknesses? This may lead to serious consequences, children may start hating you. In some cases, they hate their mother. We must encourage respect, love, and cooperation towards their mother. Anything less than these should not be cultivated among the children.

Were you angry with your wife on any day in the last week or last month or last year? Did you have proper reasons for being angry with her? Did you try to convince her of the rationale of your behaviour? Did you try to give her enough love and respect, so that she might feel friendly? Or did you express your anger after exhausting friendly attitude and respect for her. You must show positive behaviour. No male

believer should hate a woman believer. If one of her behaviour is not acceptable the other may be acceptable.

Don't you wish to rush back to your wife wherever you go? Do you arrive home very late in the night after enjoying the company of your friends and going round the town? If so, you have to stop it. You must find time to chat with your wife and thus make your matrimonial relations strong. You derive pleasure and happiness when you keep your mind open to your wife.

Your partner in life engages herself in daily chores from the early hours onwards without any rest. She keeps the whole household clean and neat. She cooks food for the members of the family; washes clothes, looks after the children, sees that they go to school; takes care of them when they go to bed. A woman who keeps up the whole family may have to complain on several matters that she is expected to look after. Her complaints are to be heard patiently and sympathetically. Meanwhile the atmosphere is to be cleared up by cracking jokes and engaging them in light talk. The mother of the believers Hazrat Ayisha said: 'The Prophet was mild and good honoured when he was in the presence of his wives.'

The Prophet said any playful activity (which is done without remembrance to God) is to be avoided except four things – man's chat with his wife, horse training, a race between the two goal – points and learning swimming. (Nasae)

Umer Farooq (R) said: -When a man is in the company of his family, he must behave like a small child. (Al marthufithaswail Islam)

Doesn't your wife do things that please you? Doesn't she express her cleverness? Do you appreciate those things? When she works hard and brings out excellent results? Are you in the habit of expressing your thanks to her?

You shall not be parsimonious in the matter of appreciating, or expressing thanks to your partner. Such things may give her peace of mind and pleasure. It may boost her health. Besides, her love and respect for you will increase.

Does she know about your income and expenditure? Are you discuss the domestic matters with her? You must share your experiences and thoughts about your family, the village, the country. If not, both of you will be distanced in knowledge and views. It may adversely affect your matrimonial relations.

Do you take into account the physical and mental status of your wife when you have sexual intercourse with her? Do you really consider whether she is interested in the act? Do you take initiative to wake up her interest? Do you think of satisfying her? The prophet's advice in this matter is to be remembered: "You should not be like birds (or animal) when you have sexual intercourse with your wives. You have to be slow and patient." (Thensi)

'If you share your wife's bed, you should not be in a hurry to quench your desire. Let her also satisfy her need. (Reported by Abu Yaala from Anas ibn Malik)

You shall not speak to your partner blaming her parents or kith and kin. Being a son-in-law, you have to respect her parents and respect her relatives. You shall not expect or ask for any material benefits from your wife's family. Likewise you must not cherish any desire for any princely treatment by her family. You must be able to see her house as your own and treat her relatives as your relatives.

The most difficult thing for a man is to treat the members of his own family such as parents and sisters and his wife on an equal footing, meting out justice to all of them. If one's wife is roughly treated by his mother or sisters, she must be advised to keep patience, and make mental adjustments. She must be spoken to with love and care. She can then depend upon you that you will remove all of her difficulties and her future would be safe in your hands.

If you are working abroad, and your wife is at home, your communication with her over phone, or through letters should give her sufficient solace and hope. You shall not blame or accuse her of anything unnecessarily; nor should you use any reproaches. Any accusation or blame would double her agony caused by your absence. Any attempt to blame her will create mental tension in her, and she is likely to suffer loss of health. Your communication should be limited to advice and suggestions. It should not be in the form of reproaches and accusations. The

communication should be carried out with good interests continuously.

The marital life is an art. Man has a large share for its failure.

Better Woman; Peaceful Home

Does your family provide you with pleasure when all of you meet? The best way to know this is to study how each member of the family spends his/her leisure. Does your husband rush to you, after the day's work or does he spend his leisure in the street or in public places? Does he get more pleasure and satisfaction when he is in your company or when in the company of his friends? Does your husband like to spend his time away from the family? If so why? Do you have any role in developing such a habit in him? Has your countenance, speech, approach or behaviour adversely influenced him? Did you ever think why he comes home very late after roaming in the streets or in public places, keeping himself away from the family? Haven't you tried to analyse his habits instead of merely blaming him for such unacceptable behaviour? Did you ever feel that you too have a role in developing such habits in him? Did you ever probe into these matters?

Several male members do not show any sign of rushing back home after the day's work. They cannot be blamed for this. This may be due to the failure of their female counterparts to evoke interest in them. If the wife creates a happy atmosphere at home, and speak, sweet words, their male counterparts will not

fail to rush home after the day's tiresome work. The presence of such women is a great asset to the family. They would be able to draw even stone hearted people to them. That is why the prophet said:

"Apart from the rewards a believer get for his piety to Allah he derives the most benefit from his righteous wife. She obeys when ordered; she is good to look at; when she makes a promise she keeps it, she safeguards her husbands wealth and her own chastity when he is away from home." (Ibnu Maja)

Does your partner enjoy peace of mind when you are beside him or when he goes out? Do you provide him with peace of mind, or worries? Peace or disharmony?

Are you able to provide your partner with peace and pleasure when he comes home tired and disturbed? Everybody needs peace of mind. Neither money nor rich environment nor luxury can provide it. There is nothing as precious as peace of mind. Therefore the greatest service one can do to one's partner is to provide peace of mind, (a state of mind free from worries). The real duty of a wife towards her partner is to provide it.

"He created for you wives from among yourselves, that you may find repose in them and he has put between you affection and mercy."

(Al-Rum - 21)

The house you live is called 'Maskan' in Arabic because it provides 'sukun' or peace. A building can be put up using materials, bricks and mortar, wood and iron etc. Though it becomes a house physically, it

needn't be the home you aspire for. It can be a kennel cage or hen house. Are you living in a house where your partner lives or in a lodging or hotel where you would like to spend as little time as possible or a 'Maskan' where you would like to spend as much time as possible?

How many times was your husband angry with you in the last one year? If you don't remember, please think about the last one month? How many times? Was he angry with you for reasons justifiable? Could you avoid it? Had you been a little careless? How did you respond when he was angry with you? Did you return in the same coin? Did his anger ever vanish as you responded so?

Did you ever control his anger? Or did you ever counter his anger by presenting a smiling face patiently, with a quiet mind? How did he respond to such a situation? Did it quench his anger? As we know, fire cannot be put out with fire; anger cannot be put out with anger. Did you ever consciously try to pacify an angry husband? Can't you overcome such situations by giving no chance to your husband to be angry with you by giving him love and pleasure? If you overcome his anger a few times patiently, perhaps you may succeed in minimising such situations. As water puts out fire you can easily put out the anger of your partner. It requires conscious effort.

If your husband has bought rough clothes for you as a present, and obviously you don't like them you may express your displeasure saying that it is good for

nothing. "Would any body wear these types of cloth? Or did you ever get a good one for me?"

This will evoke a response of anger or displeasure in any man. He may perhaps remark 'if you want, have it, otherwise leave it.'

Now think what will happen if you say just the opposite, "you always bring me good clothes, that I like very much. This is not bad, I would like to have it." Perhaps he selected it thinking that it was a good one. Now a days shop keepers swindle the consumers through illusions.

Any men who hears his remark may look at the cloth carefully and take it back to the shop, and get a good piece. This may make him more careful when he selects cloth next time.

However, nobody would like thanklessness. Rough speech begets hatred. All men may not be able to satisfy their partners' wishes. Such situations are to be tackled by patience and good humour. One should not forget all the good things the man has done so far. Islam has proscribed such ingratitude. Abdullahibnu Umer reported as said by the prophet "Allah would never bless a woman who is not thankful to her husband." (Al-Thargheeb wa tarheeb)

The prophet said:

A good woman is one who is thankful when she has been given (something), patient when denied, good to look at, and obeys when ordered. (Ahmed, Tabrani)

Lovable Daughter in Law

Does your husband give importance to you or to his mother? Don't you wish that he must give the first preference to you in all matters? Do you feel upset when your husband gives priority to his mother? Are you happy when he does so. Do you ever speak ill of his mother or complain of her to your husband? Do you try to increase his love and respect towards his mother or lessen it somehow? Did you try to keep your husband away from his mother?

Don't you feel that your husband is much obliged to his mother? Do you remember the Qur'anic statements, and, prophet's sayings about this? Don't you understand that by keeping your husband's mother aloof from him engenders hatred and disrespect in his mind?

You should not forget the divine words and prophet's sayings. Keeping your husband's mother at a distance from him, you are leading your husband towards hell. Besides, there is every chance of your accompanying him to the hell.

Allah says:

'And you are to be dutiful to your parents. If one of them or both attain old age in your life time, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor shout at them but address them in terms of honour'.

(Al-Isra: 23)

'And, do good to the parents, kinsfolk, orphans and the poor, the neighbour who is near of kin, the neighbour who is a stranger, the companion by your side, the way farer, and those whom your right hand possesses.' (Al-Nisa: 36)

If you carefully examine these divine verses you will realise that Allah has mentioned one's obligation to his parents in the context of a believer's obligations to Him.

'Come! I'll recite what your Lord has prohibited you from. Join not anything in worship with Him; be good and dutiful to your parents; kill not your children because of poverty. We provide sustenance for you and for them.' (Al-Anam: 151)

'And We have enjoined on man (to be dutiful and good) to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship upon weakness and hardship'. (Luqman:14)

'We have enjoined on man to be dutiful and kind to his parents. His mother bears him with hardship. And she brings him forth with hardship and the bearing of him and the weaning of him is thirty months.' (Al-Ahqaf: 15)

The prophet said:

Allah's satisfaction lies in the satisfaction of the parents and His anger in their anger also. (Hakim)

A person asked the prophet about the parents. He said to him 'They are your Heaven and Hell'. (Ibnu Maja)

If one cannot earn Heaven in spite of having aged parents or one of them with him, he is a loser and is accused. (Muslim)

Ibnu Abbas has reported as said by the prophet (SA) If anyone, long for Allah's pleasure and does good to his parents, and serves them, two doors of the heaven will be kept open for him. If he stands against the parents and, disobeys and disregards them, two doors of hell will be open for him. One of the followers of the prophet asked him "In case the parents are cruel" prophet said that even if they show cruelty to him, he should not utter a word of displeasure to them.

Abu Huraira reported that one person went to the prophet and asked him "Oh Prophet! Who is the person who deserves my best service". He said "your mother". He again asked twice "who is the next person!". Prophet replied "your mother" both times. He asked once more "who next?" The prophet said "your father". (Bukhari, Muslim)

Anasbnu Malik has reported Alqama, (the prophet's close follower, sincere believer and devotee, and a compassionate man) fell prey to a fatal disease. His wife approached the prophet (SA) and requested him to bless him. The prophet (SA) asked Bilalubnu Rabah, Aliyyubnu Abu Talib, and Umar al Farooq to go to him and report to him the details. They went to Alqama who was nearing death and nursed him and recited verses from Holy Qur'an to him so that he might recite them. But to their surprise, he could not recite them. Bilalubnu Rabah went back to the prophet and reported exactly all that had happened. Then the

prophet (SA) asked him whether Alqama's parents were alive. Bilal said "His father is no more. But his old mother is with him."

The prophet told Bilal to go to the old woman and convey to her his greetings, and ask her to meet him. If she is not in a position to come to him, he would go to her.

The old woman went to the prophet, who received her with respect. He asked her about Alqama. The old woman said "My son Alqama follows Allah's commands. He is a true believer and righteous man. But he doesn't behave towards me well. Therefore I hate him. He very often belittles me in the presence of his wife. Sometimes I had to obey her".

Prophet said "That is why Alqama's tongue fails to recite the verses of Holy Qur'an."

Following this the prophet asked Bilal to get firewood to throw Alqama into the burning fire. Hearing this the old woman said aloud. "Oh, the prophet! Can I bear the sight?" The prophet said "Allah's punishment will be worse than this. If possible, you must pardon him. Otherwise, he is not going to benefit from his prayers, fasts and other good deeds".

The old woman, forgave his son. The prophet sent Bilal again to Alqama. This time Alqama recited Qur'an very clearly. Reciting Qur'an he breathed his last. Prophet himself led his funeral prayer.

Oh sister, do you like to see your husband being burnt in the hellfire? Can you put up with it? You

must see that your partner in life doesn't speak anything against his mother or does anything that keeps her aloof from him? Instead, you must encourage their close relation, and promote a strong bond between them. If anything contrary has happened in the past, that must be corrected and sincerely apologized for.

Can you consider your husband's mother as your own mother? Do you love and respect her sincerely? Do you do everything after consulting her and with her approval? Or do you do everything as you like them? What is your husband's opinion about you? Good or bad? Does your mother-in-law feel that she has been ignored by you? Did you ever behave badly to her or were you angry with her? Did you show disrespect to her or adopt a policy of 'tit for tat' when dealing with her? Have you made mental preparation to patiently bear any undesirable experiences (as evils should be countered with love and good deeds).

To be a good daughter in law, is a difficult task. In fact, it is an art. But it brings about peace on earth, and rewards in the world hereafter. It needs a lot of patience and adjustments; and give and take. These spring from faith in God and belief in the life hereafter.

To court the hatred of the husband is an offence. It disturbs peaceful life in this world and brings about punishment in the life hereafter. Therefore be a daughter in law, loved by your mother-in-law.

Mother In Law

A Position of Honour

Are you a mother in law? Is your presence at home, a relief or an irritant to your daughter in law? Can you love your daughter in law, as you would love your daughter? What do you feel when your daughter in law and your son enjoy life? Do you feel happy or envious of them? Do you encourage or discourage him when your son takes his wife on a journey to a distant place? Do you advise your son to fulfil her desires or just ignore them?

Is attitude and behaviour helpful in bringing them together or does it keep them apart?

Were you ever angry with your daughter in law? Was it for a justifiable cause? Don't such faults happen in your life also? What would you do if your daughter in law commits mistakes? Do you find fault with her, and continuously criticise her? However, you must know that such responses would not be effective. As a result of such actions on your part, your daughter in law's love and respect towards you will decline. Only affectionate advice, kind approach, compassionate corrections would help you to bring about changes in your daughter in law. Blames, reproaches, criticism will not do any good. They will evoke rebellious protests.

Do you behave like a dictator at home? Do you give daughter in law, the freedom that she deserves? Do you consult her in the matters of food you prepare and other household aspects? Do you follow the principles of mutual understanding and co-operation? You must know that mutual consultation is a highly essential principle that the believers should follow. Even the prophet was ordered to follow it. He used to follow it strictly. He accepted the opinions of others gladly. He had given due importance to the opinion of his wives. He accepted their suggestions, not only in the domestic matters but also in public affairs. When the followers found it difficult to perform Umra in continuation to Hudaibiya treaty, the prophet got his own head shaved first.

It was a model performance by the prophet and was adopted according to the suggestion made by his wife. This shows that as mother in law, you have to consult in all matters, your daughter in law and give importance to her suggestions.

Do you help your daughter in law, in doing the daily chore at home? Or do you entrust heavy duties to her and keep yourself away from the scene. Do you find fault with her, when she cooks food? Do you feel that all that she does is imperfect? Both of you must follow the principles of co-operation in all matters.

Do you speak ill of your daughter in law in the presence of the guests and the neighbours? Do you receive her friends and kith and kin when they visit you? Do you belittle her parents and other relations?

Do you applaud the daughter in law when she does something appreciable? Do you motivate and encourage her? Do you actually share her pleasures and sorrows?

Did you have bad experience from your mother in law? If so, do you remember the worst experiences you endured? Why don't you wish that your daughter in law should not have the same type of experience? Did you ever think that all your sufferings should be passed on to your daughter in law? Can't you ensure that the ego clash between 'mother in law' and 'daughter in law' does not spoil your home?

You may ask questions like these, and a few others of your own. If you find satisfactory answers to them, you are really blessed, fortunate and a model to others. If not, you may make necessary changes in your behaviour.

Your presence should not become a hard nut to crack for your daughter in law. On the other hand it should be a relief and blessing to her. You must not forget that your son's peace of mind depends on his wife's state of mind and any difficulty that she suffers, will adversely affect your son and his children.

If your son is an NRI (working in the Gulf) your approach to your 'daughter in law' should be even more generous. Almost all wives of those who work abroad, are at home with their husband's parents.

Most of the Indians who are employed abroad, come home once in two years (only for two months).

For twenty two months, they live a dejected lonely life. The agony and frustration they face, are actually beyond words. They spend sleepless nights. Bearing the heavy burden of sorrow and restlessness, they become weak, mentally and physically. Gradually they become prey to several types of diseases. They are forced to take the responsibility of bringing up the children and managing the household. In this condition, they are destined to face the cruel treatment at the hands of husband's sister and mother. Some 'mothers in law' and 'sisters in law' even write letters to their sons and brothers in Gulf countries; falsely blaming their wives at home. Some of them talk to them over phone and mislead them. These letters create suspicions about their wives. Hence they write back to their wives, magnifying the words of their mothers and sisters.

Mothers in law must see to it that their words or deeds are not harmful to their daughters in law. They must adopt measures to alleviate their sorrows, and tension. They must try to bring them closer, not to alienate them. They must be vigilant in implementing these principles.

The mother-in-law's behaviour towards the 'daughter in law' determines their failure and success in life. Those mothers in law, who normally behave well towards other members of society, often adopt bad attitude towards their daughters in law. It is generally said that the real measuring rod to judge a woman's conduct to see how she treats her daughter

in-law. Good conduct is the key to success and the daughter in law is the criterion to measure it.

Prophet said:

Of course, there is nothing that weighs more than good conduct on the Last Day. Allah hates those who speak obscene words and reproach in foul language. (Thirmudi)

When the prophet was asked what makes people attain the heaven, he said that it was "the fear of God and good conduct."

Quarrelsome Sisters-in-Law

During my visit to the Gulf I happened to meet one of my old friends. He was my associate in the student days. He had left India for Gulf about twenty five years ago. Later we did not meet. His face reflected the mental problems which he was suffering from. Hence I couldn't recognise him at the first sight. When we renewed the old acquaintance and engaged in friendly talk, I asked him whether it was time to bid farewell to the Gulf.

He said 'No, if I go home I will have no means of lively hood.'

"Haven't you earned anything during your stay in the Gulf?"

He said not even a house of my own. However I married off four sisters decently without much problem. They are happy. So I am happy." He completed the sentence with a long sigh.

I asked 'What about your children?' All of a sudden, I felt that my question had upset him. However it made me know another truth about him. He said "I married myself, after my youngest sister was married off. My marriage took place very late. Hence my children are all young."

Hundreds of the youth of Kerala belong to the same category. They work in Gulf suffering the severe cold and heat silently, far away from their home. They put up with all adverse circumstances and the climatic conditions in the interest of their sisters; that is to make their life happy and secure. Many of the young people of our society remain unmarried simply because they want to fulfill their obligation to their sisters who are to be married off. There are hundreds of young men who wait until they fulfill their obligations. It is quite surprising that our society doesn't take interest in honouring or sympathising with the young men who sacrifice their golden youth for their sisters. Besides this type of care that men show towards the women folk of the society is hardly recognised or appreciated by many.

It would be appreciable if our women ask a few questions themselves in this context and try to find answers.

Do you thankfully acknowledge the service of the young men who have sacrificed their youth for you? Do you pray to Allah to make their life free from difficulties? Do you long to see that the matrimonial life of your brother (who aspired for a happy married life for you) is happy? Do you pave the way for this? Do you express your thanks to your brother, behaving well to your brother's wife? Do you feel sympathy towards her, whose husband has taken up responsibilities for saving you and now she is feeling the grief of parting. Does your presence in the family, create difficulties or happiness for the sister in law?

Do you feel enmity or hatred, when your brother speaks to her over phone or sends her messages or money? When he sends some gifts to her, how do you respond to it and what do you feel? Do you feel that you must also get the considerations as your brother's wife is getting from him? or do you think that your brother (who had delayed his marriage until you got married) must be supported by all means to make his matrimonial life happy?

Do you go to your brother when he comes home and thank him for all the favours he had done to you. Were you upset, when your brother entrusted the box he brought from Gulf to his wife? Did you have a desire that the box was to be opened in your presence and were dejected when this desire was not materialised. Do you feel happy when your brother visits his relations, friends and kith and kin with his wife?

Did your sister-in-law ever feel unhappy at your instance? Did she feel sad and shed tears just because of you? Could you realize that any harm done to her was a sufficient cause for the agony of your brother?

Do you, in remembrance of the gifts you received from your brother (when you visited him in gulf) give small token gifts to your sister in law? Don't you wish that the sister in law should behave to you well and treat you decently? Did you ever desire that your approach to your sister in law should be noble and healthy?

You have to make self evaluation by asking these kinds of questions yourself and make necessary modifications in your behaviour and approach. If you do so, you can save yourself from the cold wars going among the sisters in law. If you keep your self away from such disputes, you will be entitled to Allah's blessings and great rewards.

The Greatness of Motherhood

Who deserve rank of merit, woman or man? This question is not at all a relevant one from the point of view of Holy Qur'an. It is a question seeking unending answers; it is rather a meaningless question.

In addition to being a partner, the man is the head of the family. Family is an institution which is the smallest unit of the society. Society is a collection of families.

An institution requires a head. But there will be only one authority. A university has the vice chancellor as its head, college has a principal, school has a headmaster etc. If a nation has two prime ministers, or a college has two principals, it would be quite unnatural. In such a condition, the institutions will not survive. This exactly is the case with a family also. When there are two heads for the family, it will go to dogs. There must be one head who can lead the family. The head of the family must see that it has meaningful relations with the society outside, and must fulfill the needs of the members. Besides he has to protect the family from any difficulty, and save it from any invasion. Because of the nature of his physique and the strength of the body, only a man is able to withstand the attacks or safeguard the family. The security and safety of the family can be ensured

by a man; not a woman. Because of all these advantages, the Qur'an has designated husband as the head of the family.

The man who assumes the first place in the family is pushed to the second place in another context. While mentioning the need for doing good to the parents, Qur'an emphasizes the role of the mother.

'We have enjoined on man (to be dutiful and good) to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship up on weakness and hardship and his weaning is in two years'.

(Luqman: 14)

'And we have enjoined on man to be dutiful and kind to his parents. His mother bears him with hardship. She brings him forth with hardship'.

(Al-Ahqaf: 15)

The most respected position on earth is motherhood. The well known American Psychologist Thodore Rike in his book 'The Emotional Disparities' quoted the words of a woman who is proud of the motherhood. He has stated that the woman undoubtedly applauded man's achievements in the intellectual as well as in other areas. But women are more honourable because of one special feature. Had women not been here, the human race wouldn't have existed. It is women who give birth to the children and ensure the presence of next generation of people.

Are you proud of the motherhood! Do you realize that it is you who decide who must occupy the earth in future. Did you ever think to become a model mother

when you were initiated into matrimonial relation? Did you pray to Allah, the sustainer of the universe, when you realized that you were pregnant that your child should be useful to you, your family, the society, and the country as well? What were your feelings when you took your child in your hands; were you overwhelmed by happiness and pleasure? Were your mind and lips throbbing with prayers? A life in which there is no prayer is like a wasteland.

Did you include 'La Ilaha Illallah' in your rocking songs? When you sang it, and put the child to sleep, what did you feel and think? Was it simply that the child should sleep immediately and cause no disturbance to you? Were you singing the lullaby thinking that your child's life should be blessed with the ideals and purity that these sacred words represent? You must know that Allah looks into your mind, and evaluates its thoughts, feelings, and desires.

Man cannot conceive and give birth to child. Allah has bestowed this ability on women. It is each woman's natural obligation. That child should grow and develop in the care of its mother. These responsibilities cannot be taken up by him – he cannot breast-feed the child; he doesn't know the art of fondling and patting the child. The chief obligation of the woman is keeping up motherhood.

It is the mother who takes up the responsibilities of birth and growth of the child. She brings him/her up, carrying him in her womb for about nine months, undergoing a lot of sufferings and pain. When the child is ill, the mother forgets all mundane things like

eating, sleeping etc. and devotes her total attention to the welfare of the child. When the children wake up in the night, and cry, she looks after them ignoring all personal comforts. Even when she is stricken with the disabilities of old age, she is worried about the health and welfare of her children. All these are not artificial. These obligations are fulfilled by the mother not because of the external pressures. They come to her quite naturally.

A child's mind is clean and clear i.e. It is a *tabula rasa* (clean slate). The children copy whatever they see and hear. The most influential person is mother. The belief, behaviour, view on life, culture etc. that the mother upholds will exert a strong influence. That is why it is said that the mothers shape generations when these obligations are properly performed; women are at the helm of affairs in the world.

The first school that one attends is one's home. The first teacher is the mother. The knowledge, skills and experience that children receive from her, influence them positively or negatively. It is the mother who decides the direction of mankind, and determines the nature of the conduct of the human race. In such a situation, the woman influences the society and public life.

Preventing women from performing their obligations of motherhood, is unnatural. It is a war against the structure of the universe. It leads the human race to destruction and disaster. That is why Rousseau said 'If you wish to remind everybody of the real message they have to convey, then start with

the mothers. The change that it brings about will take you aback. All calamities start from this primary diversion.'

It seems that man has lost all his value, in the modern times. (He is a valueless being in the world). Hence the motherhood that gives him birth, has also become valueless. Even women are not aware of the greatness of motherhood. It is very difficult to meet a woman who is proud of having given birth to children, and brought them up; in the contemporary society. The motherhood has been considered utterly valueless position. The position of a receptionist in the hotel, or a dancer is more valuable than that of being a mother. Many people - deride the human child. Therefore women do not want to give birth to children. Some are afraid that if they become pregnant and deliver children, their beauty will be eroded. Some men also don't like their women getting pregnant and becoming mothers. When children wake up in the midnight, causing disturbance to their peaceful sleep, they are annoyed. Actually what led to the undervaluation of motherhood were these types of ignoble thoughts.

Islam taught that the most valuable thing in the world is the motherhood, which brings forth children. The most respected on earth is the motherhood, the position of a woman called mother. A person asked the prophet 'Oh, the prophet who does deserve the maximum service from me. The prophet said your mother.' Who next? asked the person 'your mother'. Who next' he asked. Again prophet said 'your

mother'. The man asked once more 'who next'. The prophet said 'your father'.

The Holy Qur'an also has assigned high position to mother. Hence it is mother who deserve the highest respect and love on earth. Only the meanest persons would look down upon the mothers. Those who are sophisticated and knowledgeable can never refrain from respecting the mother.

Breast Feeding

Mother is the repertoire of affection. She is love incarnate and the human form of patience. Mother gives milk from her breast. The child learns the alphabet of life from her face.

Holy Qur'an enjoins that the child will be given breast milk as well as love and affection. It describes the woman as breast feeding mother. The mother bore man suffering hardship on hardship.

"We have enjoined on man to be dutiful to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship upon weakness and hardship and his weaning is two years. Give thanks to me and to your parents". (Luqman: 14)

Mother carried him in her womb suffering a lot of hardship. "And we have enjoined on man to be dutiful to his parents. His mother bears him with hardship and she brings him forth with hardship and the bearing of him and the weaning of him is thirty month". (Al-Ahqaf: 15)

Qur'an teaches that there is no relationship closer than the relationship of breast feeding a child. When it describes the terrors of the Day of Judgment it says that it is the day on which the breast feeding mother

When a mother feeds the child with breast milk, she is not only giving nutrition to the baby for its sustenance, but also keeping before him the world of compassion open. Who can decipher the emotions reflected on the face of a mother who suckles the child with presence of mind, in the natural way. Words are inadequate for explaining it.

But, now-a-days, everything has turned upside down because we are living in a world of commercial culture. Everything has been commercialized. Everything is decided on a profit-loss basis. Therefore in our world, digits dominate. Even the mother who ought to be the perennial source of love and compassion, has been dominated by this. The decision as to whether the child which has been shaped in her womb is to be born, and whether it is to be grown outside the womb etc. are questions to be settled by calculating the profit and loss.

The lust which is an outcome of the commercial culture has extinguished the compassion in the heart of mother. The compassion and affection even in the heart of women has dried up as if it was a desert. Therefore the mother who watches the tele-serial, hates the screaming baby. Even if she gives him breast milk, it is mechanically administered, without any affection!

If she has to wash the baby, it is done mechanically, like a mechanic who polishes the machine without any human feelings. Her sentiments are always with the character in the tele film.

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forgets her child. This indicates the unimaginable chaos raging in the universe on that day.

"Oh man kind! Fear your Lord and to be dutiful to him, verily, earthquake of the hour is a terrible thing. The day you shall see it every nursing mother will forget her suckling and every pregnant will drop her load". (Al-Hajj : 1-2)

In the view of Qur'an breast feeding is as important as giving birth to the child. It gives equal position to both the mothers who gives birth and who feeds breast milk. The relation that exists between the (foster) mother who breast feeds the child is as good as the relation between the mother who has given birth to him. Therefore, in Islam, one's relation with the real mother and the foster mother is not different. While explaining the permitted conjugal relation the Qur'an says:

Forbidden to you (for marriage) are your mother, your daughters, your sisters, your father's sisters, your mother's sisters, your brother's daughters, your foster mothers who gave you suck, your foster milk suckling sisters, your wife's mothers, your step daughters under your guardianship.

(Annisa:23)

In this context, Qur'an includes in the same category both the mothers i.e. the mother who has given birth to the child and the mother who breast feeds the child, and includes the sisters also in the same category. All these make clear the importance that Islam attaches to breast feeding.

Qur'an views the breast feeding as an inescapable obligation. That is why, the Holy Qur'an has enjoined payment of remuneration to the mother who breast feeds the child.

"Then if they give suck to the children for you, give them their due payment and let each of you accept the advice of the other in a just way."

(Altaaq:6)

Qur'an instructs that the period of breast feeding is two years for a child. Allah says about the divorced women that if the father of the child wishes that the child must be breast fed for the whole period of two years mother should do so. The father shall be obliged to meet the expenses of food and cloth. But nobody is charged to spend more than what he can spend. The mother should not be punished for the reason that the child is hers.

"The mothers shall give suck to their children for two whole years (that is) for those parents who desire to complete the term of suckling, but father of the child shall bear the cost of mother's food and clothing on a reasonable basis. No person shall be treated unfairly on account of her/his child. And on the father's heir is incumbent the like of that. If they both decide on weaning, by mutual consent and after due consultation, there is no sin on them. And if you decide on foster suckling mother for your children, there is no sin on you. Provided you pay (the mother) what you agreed on reasonable basis". (Al- Baqara : 233)

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There are women who do not breast feed their children for fear that it would erode their beauty. In the contemporary society, there are a good number of women who entrust their babies to nurses, who feed them with artificial milk/dry milk. Ensuring safety and security of the baby is the natural obligation of mother. Severing a woman from such an obligation will only develop a lot of problems. One of the reasons for the emotional and behavioural abnormality is that women have been severed from the position of motherhood. Mikhail Gorbachev has explained in his 'Perestroika' how the Soviet Union declined herself by keeping women away from the central position she had been holding for 70 years. He said that the Soviet Society had failed in considering special rights claimed by their women as mothers with the inescapable responsibility of educating the children. They didn't find time to do daily chores at home such as keeping home, bringing up children, developing a happy family atmosphere etc. because of their involvement in scientific research, working in production centres and manufacturing units, and participating in creative work. The main reason of many of our problems is weakening family relations, and cold attitude towards familial obligations.

Good Parents

Children are a boon and ornament to the family. There is no one who doesn't long for their presence. Is there any one who doesn't like to hear the babbling of a baby? They give pleasure and peace of mind to the parents. Those couples who are not blessed with children, are dejected and bleak.

What should be our approach to the children? Islam clearly explains it. If we follow it that will be holy and rewarding. Violation of the instructions will be punishable and non rewarding.

Islam instructs that we must show compassion to the children and treat them affectionately. Holy prophet said:

"You love children. Show mercy to them. When you make a promise to them keep it. When there is a small child with you, behave to him as if you are a child". (Ibnu Sakir)

The great responsibility of bringing children up by fostering all good and human qualities in them making them an asset to the family and the society is bestowed on the parents.

Holy prophet said:

"You interact with your children and teach them good behaviour."

In order to have a self assessment, let us ask ourselves some questions.

What do you feel if your child cries when you are busy with your work? Do you feel angry? Do you feel bored when the child is obstinate, when you are suffering from illness or tiredness? How do you respond when the child gets up in the midnight and cry continuously? Did you ever curse your child? Cursing children is an offence which invites severe punishment. Holy prophet prohibited cursing even cattle.

Do you ever scold and use offensive language in the presence of children? Do you tell lies? Do you instruct children to support you in lying? Do you ask them to suppress truth? Do you teach them to tell the beggars that there is no money at home, despite the fact that you have money? Remember that your children's mind is as clean as a sheet of white paper. Whatever they hear and say will be copied by it. Developing bad habits among one's children is really unfortunate.

Does mutual anger reflect in your behaviour to children? Do you punish the child unnecessarily? Do you speak to the children blaming them? If you do so, your children get spoiled easily. They gradually disobey you.

Do you speak ill of a child and praise another one? Perhaps you may have your own reason for it. However, such an act will bring about long lasting repercussions. All children of the same parents

needn't be equally able or of the same nature. It is quite natural that you shall not behave to the children without taking into account this law of nature. Do you blame your children in the presence of others? Don't forget that such a treatment will deprive them of their morale and make them incompetent. Besides, it will create hatred and disrespect towards you. They will gradually keep themselves aloof from you. Really, children are not responsible for their competence or incompetence. All these are predetermined by God. Even if any human has a role in that, it will be you. Do you tell your child about Allah? Do you invite their attention to the wonderful creations around? Do you tell them about the Holy prophets and great men? Do you tell them the stories and historical facts which help develop in them certain essential values such as love, compassion, affection, kindness, give and take, and honesty? Children are easily attracted by stories.

Do you keep the television switched on just to avoid them crying? Do you watch TV in their presence? Even if you are just a viewer of the news items, you will have to watch the advertisements, often full of undesirable scenes. They attract children also. They not only influence their brain and eyes, but also spoil their mind and spirit.

Do you have any imagination or dreams about your children and of their future? Is it your wish that they should become rich men and VIPs? Do your hopes and dreams reflect in your prayers? Holy prophet has taught that the prayers of the parents for their children have special effect.

Do you take your children along with you so that they watch your action in prayers and make it a part of their life? Do you give them some training in this? Likewise don't you teach them how to respect the elder persons? Do you tell them about its importance? It will be more effective if you show them how to love, respect, serve and obey them. Children will observe them and develop them in their character. Do you control the expenses on toys, shoes and such other things? Whoever you are, it is better to be moderate in spending. Do you tell your children the importance of simplicity? Don't you tell them about the importance of moderate spending? Your life style and approaches naturally influence your children. At the same time you must know that parsimony is also not desirable.

Do you introduce your neighbours and villagers to your children? It would help in strengthening family relations and develop social sense. Do you encourage your children to playing with their friends and establish friendship or do you discourage it? It must be, of course, encouraged. But you must be aware of undesirable friendships which you must discourage.

Do you scold and punish children? If you do, is it after making them realize the significance of the offence they have committed? You must not punish them simply to appease your anger without making them realize their mistakes. It should not occur to them that father or mother has punished them without proper reason. And, at the same time you must interact with them closely and must grant them

freedom to express their sentiments and feelings to you. When you make decisions on the matters related to children, you must consult them, and make them realize the necessity of making a decision on the matter. Such an act will give them satisfaction. It will enable them to develop their abilities.

Do you make them realize occasionally that life is not always easy and happy one but may be hard and difficult? Do you enlighten them asking them to observe those who are suffering in life and encourage them to praise Allah who has blessed them with a happy life? Do you point out the sufferings and hardships of the poor people and develop in children the feeling of sympathy and compassion? Making children contribute freely to the people suffering in life will help develop compassion in children.

Do you take your children with you when you go to visit the patients? Do you tell them the value of health? Do you bring to their attention Qur'anic statement that illness is a test given to man by Allah and if we patiently suffer, Allah will reward us immensely. We have to make children participate in our prayers. Telling them about death and the life hereafter would be a great service to them.

Do you help students who go to school to learn the lessons? Do you blame them for being backward in studies? Or do you advise them in a loving and helping manner? What do children feel when you help them in their studies – they love it or dislike it? Your approach should be such that they like your involvement in their studies.

Do you help and encourage the students when they do something good? Do you give them any gifts when they come out successful in their efforts? Giving them moderate praises, and presents or gifts, are good for encouraging them, but too much and out of place it is bad.

Do you make them participate in receiving and honouring the guests? Do you take them with you, when you go to visit your kith and kin?

Do you show any discrimination between children (that is giving more importance to boys than to girls)? Please remember that showing any discrimination among the children is bad not only in this world, but in the world hereafter.

Do you convene family meetings once in a week? It is very effective to fortify the relations among the members of the family.

If you answer these questions satisfactorily, you can be proud that you are model parents. You may enjoy the benefits of it in both worlds.

Reaching God Through Relatives

Does the presence of the close relatives give you relief and joy? Have you ever felt that relations are sometimes restrictions or bondages? Do you sincerely love your husband's sister? Or do you consider her as a curse and disturbance? Do you like your husband loving and helping the members of his family? Do you encourage it or discourage it? Are you prepare to give as you like receive from your brother and his wife and your sister in law? Do you wish that your husband should give considerable preferences to your relatives? Can you extend the same preference to his relatives?.

Have you realized the importance that Islam gives to the family relations? Do you remember those points when you interact with members of your own family and the family of your husband? Does your ego stand in the way of respecting, approving and loving the nearest relatives? These questions are to be answered by the wife as well as the men folk.

Ask these questions to yourself and evaluate the answers in the light of Islamic principles. Such an exercise will throw new light on your life.

Holy Qur'an uses the same word to mean both 'womb' and 'family relations'. At the same time it is the word which has been attached to the Holy

attributes (ie. Qualifying words) of Allah. In the Holy Qur'an 'Womb' are called 'Arham'; and the related word is used to mean the people of the womb. It is related to Allah's name 'Raheem'. The use of these three terms is not accidental. It took shape when Allah blended them. Allah has ordered:

"And, fear Allah through whom you demand (your mutual rights) and do not cut the relations of the wombs. Surely, Allah is ever an All-watches over you." (Annisa: 1)

"But kindred to blood are nearer to one another in decree ordained by Allah Allah is the all knower of everything". (Al-Infal: 75)

"Allah enjoins worshipping none but Allah, totally for Allah's sake and in accordance with the sunnah of the prophet and giving help to kith and kin and that Allah ordered you to give them eg. Wealth, visiting, looking after them, or any other kind and forbids evil deeds eg. Illegal (sexual acts, disobedience to parents, polytheism, to tell lies, to give false, to kill) and all that is prohibited by Islamic law and all kinds of oppressions".

(Al-Nahal: 90)

"And those who join that which Allah has commanded to be joined (ie. They are good to their relatives and do not sever the bond of kinship) and fear their Lord, and dread the terrible reckoning (abstain from all kinds of sins) and evil deeds which Allah has forbidden and perform all kinds of good deeds which Allah has ordained". (Al-Ra'd: 21)

"And give the kinsman his due and to the poor and to the way farer". (Al-Isra: 26)

"And when the relatives and the orphans and the poor are present at the same time of division give them out of the property and speak to them words of kindness and justice". (Al-Nisa: 8)

The Holy prophet said Allah says:

'I am the most merciful; I created the womb and I gave it one of my names. Therefore I shall establish relation with one who maintains the family relations. I shall sever relations with one who doesn't keep it'.

(Thirmudi)

If you wish that Allah should establish relations with you, you must honour your relatives; be always careful not to cut relation with the family. Even if they keep distance from you, you should keep yourself near to them so that you may serve and support them.

Holy Qur'an proscribes severing relations with the family.

"And those who break the covenant of Allah, after its ratification and sever that which Allah has commanded to be joined and work mischief in the land, on them is the curse, and for them is the unhappy (evil) home (Hell)". (Al-Ra'd: 26)

The extent and consideration that Holy Qur'an gives to family relation is worthnoting.

'There is no restriction on the blind nor any restriction on the lame, nor any restriction on the sick, nor on yourselves if you eat from your houses or the houses of your fathers or the houses

of your mothers or the houses of your brothers or the houses of your sisters or the houses of your father's brothers, or the houses of your father's sisters, or the houses of your mother's brothers, or the houses of your mother's sisters where of you hold keys or from the house of a friend. No sin on you eat together or apart. But when you enter the houses greet one another with a greeting from Allah, blessed and good. Thus Allah makes clear the signs to you that you may understand'.

(Annur: 61)

Qur'anic verses identify the nearest relatives. They indicate that their houses are like our own house.

Everybody has to remember that his and his partner's attitude to the relatives and kith and kin plays a determining role in the success and failure in life in this world and hereafter. Therefore they must try hard to keep the family ties intact.

Residential House

A Blessing or A Curse

To have 'one's own house' is every body's dream. One needs a house wherein there are residential facilities. It should be neat and tidy.

For whom are the houses? Are they for us? How many rooms do we require? Why do a family of four or five members require a house which can accommodate 8 or 10 people. Whatever be the number of the rooms in a house one can use one room at a time. We are accommodating the devil in the unnecessary space.

Though the house has been built for our use why do we decorate and polish the exterior of the house, rather than the interior? Why do we spend lakhs for external decoration?

Many of us build houses, not for our use but for exhibition; ie. to show up one's pride and financial capacity. Thus they take the visitors and guests around and inside it; show them every bed room and bathroom. They describe the materials such as cement, sand and steel used in the construction of the house and mention the masons, and carpenters whose expertise was made use of in the construction. Anybody who thinks a little about the human behaviour, can easily realize the 'greatness' expressed though the construction of a house — How

meaningless it is to express one's achievement in terms of the volume of money spent by him! A person who failed to establish his individuality by showing any excellence in character, service rendered to the people, righteousness or learning may thus beat his trumpet. One who is struck with acute inferiority complex, may feel that he has been ignored by other people. To overcome this feeling, huge constructions are put up to attract the attention of the people.

This act of putting up one's pseudo-prestige has examples in the history of man kind. There are some narrations in the Holy Qur'an about the human societies which were annihilated by the wrath of Allah. Such two societies were Aad and Samood. The tribe of Aad put up buildings on the hills and boasted their pride. The prophet Hood who was appointed to refine them advised them to put an end to the evil practice. They did not heed his words. Therefore they became prey to Allah's wrath. He destroyed them totally. The Samood tribe made houses on the hills of huge rocks and prided themselves on their achievements. Salih, the prophet was sent to them to bring them to the righteous path. They did not heed his words and insisted on disobedience. Allah punished them too. The remnants of their buildings can be seen even today.

"Saw you not how your Lord dealt with Ad people of Iram (who were very tall) like lofty pillars, The like of which were not created in the land, And with Thamud (people) who hewed out rocks in the valley to make dwellings". (Al-Fajr: 6-9)

"As for Thamud and Ad people denied the striking hour of judgement. As for Thamud, they were destroyed by the awful cry! And as for Ad, they were destroyed by a furious violent wind! Which Allah imposed on them for seven nights and eight days in succession so that you could see men lying over thrown, as if they were hollow trunks of date – palms! Do you see any remnants of them?"

(Al-Haqqah:5-8)

Now, let us ask ourselves! Did we learn any lesson from the story of Ad and Thamud people? Do we remember the warning given by Qur'an while getting house constructed? Is there anything in our house which has been just put up to indicate pride and false prestige? Is there any construction outside house (just for exhibition!). Is there anything in the construction of the house which is not in the category of essential or highly essential item?

How much did you spend on the front door of your house? Of course it ought to be strong and good to look at! But why spend lakhs on it? Why the windows cost thousands?

Are the chairs in your drawing room just to sit on? Really? Why do we have the chair of thousands of rupees just to sit on? If the person who sits has peace of mind, he can sit on any chair. If not, a chair of lakh of rupees doesn't give him any peace of mind.

What is the cost of the cot you are lying on? Why do you need such a costly cot? Does the price of the cot in any way affect your sleep? Is there any one who cannot go to sleep because he is lying on a cheap cot?

Is there a show-case in your house? What does it contain? Are there vessels and glass wares? Are they used to serve dinner? Are there utensils which have never been used?

‘A house of one’s own’ is just a dream for a number of people in our country. There are many who ‘go to bed’ in the night on the foot path. Lakhs of people are living in slums and huts which cannot protect them heat or cold or rain. Do you ever think of such people when you are housed in cosy buildings with all comforts. If those who spend lakhs and thousands of rupees on doors, furniture, and furnishings of the houses, think about the poor people and help them, they will earn rewards in both the worlds. It will save them from Allah’s wrath.

Those who serve for decades in the Gulf and spend the money they earned to get houses constructed in their native places, find it difficult to maintain them when they return home from the Gulf. There are also such people who spend all the money earned during healthy period of their life to get houses constructed and then leave them to their heirs after their death.

Let us ask once more. Are our houses a blessing or a curse? Is there devilish extravagance in them? Are there utensils or furniture in the house, for which we will be accountable to Allah? If there are any such things in it, we must sincerely repent. We must caution our children and kith and kin not to repeat the same mistake when they get their houses built.

Love For Ornaments

Consequent on the murder of a local leader, the houses in a particular place in Kannur District in Kerala were attacked and houses set on fire. We visited the place. When the violent mob came with all types of arms, the women and children were running amuck. The houses abandoned were plundered by the violent mob – all furnishings, utensils, windows, doors etc. were thrown into fire.

All houses were extensively plundered, mostly gold was looted. Even from the houses of very poor people, 15 to 20 sovereigns were plundered. The ornaments were kept as usual in the boxes, shelf's, tables etc. The owners had run away from the houses without taking their belongings with them.

In this context, we could ask a few questions and try to find the answers.

How much gold ornaments have you got? When do you wear them? We know that ornaments are used, as an enhancer of beauty of the women.

Have you realized that ornaments are used to increase the beauty of women? If so, do you wear them with that objective? The only one person who has right to appreciate your beauty, is your husband. You need wear ornaments only when you are with

your husband. Is there any woman who wears the ornaments of 25 to 35 sovereigns when she is go to bed? Does any woman use the gold ornaments when she is at home? She may use them when she goes out – ie. on the occasion of paying visit to the parents, attending a wedding, or paying family visits. Are these visits for showing up one's beauty or adorning oneself? Or are they for satisfaction of one's ego which is a severe sin! Wearing ornaments all over one's body is self humiliation. One's wearing those ornaments all over the body while going out is just exhibitionism ie. to make others see that she has so many ornaments. Don't you know that it is devilish. Whatever we do to satisfy our ego, is a severe sin? It invites Allah's anger and punishment. It is always better to avoid all ornaments other than what you wear every day and ensure that one has got only what is essential.

Nobody eats up gold. It doesn't melt off itself, nor does it rust. Then, why do we have so many jewelleries? In some places, the number of jewellery shops is more than that of the rice-shops. Even though all other shops (such as of groceries, vegetables, fruits etc.) are run at a loss, the jewellery shops make profits. It is the owners of the jewelleries that spend a lot of money for advertisements. Have you ever thought about who is being exploited by these shops. Really, the poor consumers of gold.

When you buy gold from a dealer you must be familiar with two terms – loss at work and labour charge. These words are used just to exploit you. If

one does not exploit you in terms of loss at work, or labour charge, gold is likely to be spurious.

If the gold ornaments are not renewed, in the name of changing fashion, even 1/4th of the present jewellery shops would not exist. Many users don't use gold ornaments which are two or three years old. They sell them in exchange of the new ones. Do you exchange the old ornaments in exchange of the new ones? This is sheer waste of money. Hence a severe moral offence also.

If you don't have irrational love for the gold ornaments, why can't you think in terms of disposing them of and investing the money in some productive business? Won't your husband be in favour of it? Perhaps you may be forced to give gold ornaments to your daughter when she is getting married? But when your son gets married, why can't you insist that the bride should not bring gold ornaments with her? This would help avoid expenditure lakhs. If you insist on ordinary ornaments for your daughter in law, the dead stock of gold can be dispensed with.

Allah says:

"And those who hoard up gold and silver and spend them not in the way of Allah, announce unto them a painful torment on the day when that will be heated in the fire of hell and with it will be branded their foreheads and then backs and it will be said unto them. "This is the treasure which you hoarded for yourselves. Now taste of what you used to hoard" (Al-Touba: 34-35)

The gold ornaments of one hundred or one hundred and fifty sovereigns are not essential. They are unnecessary. Spending money for buying it amounts to sin. Allah says "And waste not by extravagance. Verily He likes not those who waste by extravagance". (Al-An'am:41)

"And give the kinsman his due and to the miskin (poor) and to the way farer. But spend not wastefully in the manner of spend thrift".

"Verily spend thrifts are brothers of the devil and the devil is ever ungrateful to his Lord".

(Al-Isra:26-27)

Do you look at the poor people around you when you wear ornaments on almost all parts of your body. Don't you observe that their eyes are fixed on the ornaments you wear? It creates a host of emotions within them which gradually become envy and lead to revenge. When Allah instructs us to pray always to save us from the harms of envy, we must try to save ourselves from it. We must be careful to avoid anything that creates envy in other people.

You ask yourself once more – why am I wearing ornaments? Is it for egoistic exhibition? If it is so it may lead to hell. The prophet said 'I shall talk to you about the heirs of hell. They are disobedient, vainglorious exhibitionist.'

Who Controls Us

How many rooms are there in your house? Are there rooms which remain unoccupied even when all members of the family are present?

How many vessels are there in your show case, which have never been used even once in a year? Is there any costly vessel which cannot be used every day?

Do you prepare a list of items which are to be bought when you go shopping? Do you categorise them according to your needs – very essential, and not essential? Are you very much attracted by the utensils and other instruments used by your neighbours? Do you long for such attractive things and, wish to adopt a new life style?

We have to ask such questions to ourselves. Today we have lost our control on our lives. We are not led by us. It is the market which controls us. Markets are structured by powerful capitalists who are interested in making profits. They don't mind values. They used advertisements as instruments to conquer and enslave us.

Advertisements have become the essential and indispensable part of life. They invade us in dailies, weeklies, monthlies, and other medias such as radio,

TV and films. They invade our daily lifestyle. They tempt us. They create responses in our subconscious mind. The products glorified by them, gradually creep into us.

Advertisements very often influence our emotions. They develop new (and artificial) desires in our mind. We submit ourselves to those emotional responses, without giving a thought. Thus we become the slaves of our new desires. Things which are really unessential seem highly essential to us.

Advertisements play a very important role in creating desires. The illusionary advertisements weaken our thought capacity and alienate us from our healthy traditions. They gradually creep into all walks of our life. What must we eat? How to eat? What do we drink? Which utensil, must we use to eat and drink? What should we wear? How to brush our hair? What oil should we use? Which tooth paste should be used? Which cosmetics should we use? How should we fashion our smile, facial expressions, and looks? How to walk, how to sit, how to take bath – all personal matters, petty or important, are decided by the great manufacturers who have their own philosophy of selfishness. The personality of majority of the people, and their desires and fancies are determined and directed by advertisements. The behavioural pattern of the consumers is shaped by them.

The symbols of social status of our people are decided by the big capitalists and their advertisements. They given an impression that happy

and satisfactory matrimonial life and safe family are commodities that are available in the market. They given training to keeping our neighbours jealous of us. Therefore instead of love, compassion, sympathy and kindness, the emotions of revenge, envy, and unhealthy competition grow in the society. The commercial advertisements upset the rhythm of our life. They turn our value, upside down. The minds of the people are captured by the images of the models appearing the advertisements. We lose the diversity in our concepts of beauty, and personality. Everything becomes boringly uniform and stereotyped.

Advertisements do not take into account the necessities of human life. They consider only luxuries. Thus we think that such luxuries should be acquired at any cost and failure to do so would be a great loss. The advertisements therefore are engaged in a psychological war to make its followers spendthrifts.

Hence let us ask ourselves – How much do the advertisements attract you? Do you buy any thing believing in them? Have you ever been swindled by the ads? Did the advertisements succeed in making you believe that unnecessary things are very essential for you? When you buy some thing which appears in the advertisements in the TV, do you realize that in lakhs of rupees paid as advertisement tariff there is your contribution also. Did you ever realize that when you buy a product advertised in the TV, it actually had less value than that paid by you?

Whatever be the answers to these questions, we must be able to make certain decisions. We must not

be swindled by the temptations of the commercial world which adopts marketing strategies for its own existence. We must have will power; which should not be shaken by the advertisers. Then only we can exist without losing our personality. We must try to be the masters and not the slaves of the marketing world.

Do You Watch Television

Are you in the habit of watching television? If so when? Do you switch on the TV just to watch the informative items? Or to see the tele-serials. Do you see the cinematic dances? Do you switch on the TV in the company of your parents, brothers and sisters?

When did you start watching the TV? Did some of the programmes create a kind of dissonance in you, when you first watched the TV? Thereafter the difficulty was lessening, as you continued watching the TV and gradually you developed an interest in watching the programmes. Didn't you feel ashamed when you watched some of the programmes along with your children, husband, parents and other members of the family? Now a days such feelings are rare. What is the reason? Have the programmes improved or have you developed an immunity to such programmes?

The prophet said that modesty (and chastity) is half of the faith in Allah "If you do not possess modesty (decency) you can do whatever you like".

When you start watching TV, think about your eyes, which watch it. There are 600 crores human beings on earth – that is there are 12000 crores eyes in the world. But your eyes are unique and they are quite

different from your ears. Allah has made your eyes carefully and meticulously.

During my visit to UAE last time, I disembarked at Sharja airport. This time the authorities took the computerised pictures of the eyes of the passengers, for record. During the previous visits, they had obtained copies of the passport as a travel record. This experience made it clear that each person's eyes are unique which may be distinguished from other eyes. The Lord of the universe has created the eyes very meticulously so that you may use them properly (and not in any way you like). The use of your eyes will be evaluated on the Day of the Judgment. Do you remember this when you watch the TV? Have you ever come across the Qur'anic statements about the eyes, Allah has given you. Allah said:

"Allah gave you the power of hearing, sight and heart. So that you may be thankful to Him."

(Al-Nahal: 78)

"It is Allah who created you and gave you hearing, seeing and understanding. But you are little thankful to Him". (Al-Mulk 23)

"For surely the hearing, the sight, the heart, all of those shall be questioned of". (Al-Isra:36)

Are you conscious about the time spent when you watch the TV? Do you remember that time once passed will not be brought back and the days gone by will never return? We must always remember that the links of time that dropped out from our life – span will never be back and therefore we are slowly

approaching death. In the life hereafter, Allah will question us about how we had spent our time on earth. Holy prophet has warned us about this. Do you remember that Hadith (the statement of prophet) which advises you to manage your time properly and profitably? Do you ensure when you watch the TV that the programmes you see are kept within the limits set by God.

How much has the TV influenced you? Has it changed your character, behaviour, speech and taste? Has it changed your culture and views? And your eating habits and even food? If so, has it been positive or negative change? Has the possession of TV made you buy any item which is not essential. Since the installation of TV in your house, have you experienced that there has been less attention given to your parents? Has the TV affected the Qur'an recitation? Has the TV influenced your children in anyway? That is, has it made any changes in their daily activities and behaviour such as in standing, sitting, drinking, playing and bathing. Do they use the words, expressions, styles and songs that they usually hear on the TV? Do they just imitate the style of walking that they usually see on the TV? Who do they imitate? Whom do children like very much? Are they their brothers, neighbours, relations, friends or the stars usually appearing on the TV?

Has the television adversely affected your children's learning? Do you watch TV when they are learning? If so, the TV would attract them to it. Thus it would adversely affect their learning.

These types of questions are to be asked by you and you have to find your answers. It will make you aware of the adverse effects of TV on your children and the family. We must be conscious of the fact that Allah always observes us. We are accountable to Him. He says: "He knows all those little things he does". (4:108, 3:120, 8:47)

Family Get together

When do your family members get together? Is it for dining only? Of course, as far as possible all members of the family should get together for taking food.

All those who go to work away from their home town or village are likely to come back, late in the evening. Hence it may be convenient to meet in the morning, for breakfast. You can make a decision to the effect that all members of the family meet for fifteen minutes, after the morning (Fajr) prayer. Let the members who attend, read out the Holy Qur'an and its translation or interpretation for 10 minutes; when others carefully listen to it. If any one has any question, they can discuss it. In this way, all members will participate in this endeavour. In continuation to this, all members can explain their programme for the day, in two to three minutes. Students may present their problems on what they are expected to do on the day. If there is any special problem to be attended to, it may also be put before the family meeting. In the end, all can disperse after a supplication.

The whole programme of family get-together may not take more than 15 minutes. The Islamic atmosphere of the family can be ensured by this programme. Besides, it will help in increasing love,

responsibility, cooperation, and unity among the members. As each member puts up his daily programme before the whole family, all will become free from stress. It brings about happiness and satisfaction. Besides all will enjoy Allah's blessings and mercy.

If you can get-together for an hour once in a month it will be a great blessing. The first ten minutes can be set apart for reading and understanding the Qur'an. After this, they may sing songs or tell a story. Those who can explain world events may explain them. Each one can speak about his or her Qur'an study or study of Islamic subjects. The head of the family can present the previous month's budget to the family council. If extravagant or excessive spending has occurred, it should be pointed out. This exercise will ensure the economic stability of the family. Besides, it will help develop the artistic talents of the members. It may help to correct the mistakes made by any member. It will be an encouragement to the members of the family to correct themselves and develop love, compassion and kindness.

You can try this suggestion. The result will be beyond your expectations.

Appendix

Amazing Farida

Mr. O. M. Basheer, a native of Peringathur, Near Thalassery, passed away on Friday, 29th December 2006. News was conveyed to me after the night prayer. I started for Peringathur immediately and arrived at Peringathur early in the morning, after a halt at Calicut in the night.

Basheer was not very popular. He had no relation with any organisations, religious or political. He did not participate in any public or social activities. In the last 18 years he was not able to stand up on his feet, nor could he sit down. However, whoever came across him, remembered him and his wife Farida. She was unforgettable to those who met her.

When I was in my office, I received Mrs. Fareeda's telephone call two days before, Basheer's death. She conveyed the message given by Basheer's doctor – that was, he wanted some responsible person to be near him. The real intent of doctor's message was that Mr. Basheer was nearing his end, and he could do nothing more to save his life. I passed on this to Mrs. Fareeda very diplomatically. On the other end of the telephone was Fareeda, who was sobbing. I tried to console her. But my mind was slipping on to indescribable amazement. For the last 15 years,

Fareeda had become synonymous with 'Amazing'. She knew that Basheer was slowly bidding farewell to all. It was clear from her behaviour that the suffering and sacrifice of the past 18 years hadn't created any lethargy in her.

It was in 1991 that the couple entered our lives. One day, a car came to my office at Vellimadukunnu, in search of me. The driver came up and informed me that a gentleman wanted to see me. I asked the driver to send him in. But the driver told me that he could not walk. The indication was that I had to go down and meet the visitor. And I heard Basheer's tragic story while sitting in the car.

Basheer had been working in Kuwait. Twenty one years before, he had come to Kerala to wed Fareeda. They lived as husband and wife just for a month. He went back to Kuwait as his leave expired. Later he came home on a two-week leave. Then the unfortunate accident happened; the bus that he was travelling in met an accident in Poone. It gave him a dislocation of the spine. His body got paralysed. His legs and hands were immovable. He underwent continuous treatment for three years. There was no effect. Gradually Mr. Basheer fell into the darkness of frustration; he developed a hatred towards life. It was during this period, that with an immovable body and turbulent mind; he happened to read "the Prakasharekha" (ray of light) in the Madhyaman daily. It dealt with the hard tests that happen in human life; the different approaches that may be used to with-stand then, and the after effects. It showed the

path that provides peace of mind and way to fruitful life. Basheer read it and got peace of mind. He came to Vellimadukunnu, the place where the Madhyamam was printed and published; to see the writer of article and spend a few minutes with him. Later he used to come frequently and spent sometime with the author and went back with a calm mind. Wherever he could not come, he used to make a phone call. All those who met Basheer, felt strong sympathy for him. His wife, Mrs. Fareeda, surprised everybody by being close to Basheer for eighteen years of suffering.

For a period of eighteen years, Fareeda looked after and nursed Mr. Basheer. She cleaned his bed, supported him when he had to move a little, washed him and nursed him throughout day and night. He was taken from hospital to hospital in Kerala. Basheer needed Farida's support to eat or drink. There was nobody else to lend a helping hand to fareeda, in her difficulties. She never expressed a word of displeasure. It seemed that she was very enthusiastic in serving and nursing Basheer during his invalidity.

What made her serve him through thick and thin for a long period so sincerely and lovingly, is a subject of study in human relationships. The usual link that connects husband and wife in such situations, are children. But the couple had no children. Basheer did not have the physical ability for sexual relations. His fingers were so paralysed that he could not even give Farida a loving pat with his hands. Farida could not expect anything of him. She did not expect any physical or financial benefits Mr. Basheer. Therefore,

relationship could not be interpreted in physical or material terms. They enjoyed only forty eight days of matrimonial relationship. Perhaps the meaningful life they enjoyed for a short period, might have developed an individual bond of love between them and it had been the positive factor that made Farida serve and nurse her husband.

Allah has stated in Holy Qur'an: "He created for you wives from among yourselves, that you may find repose in them, and He has put between you affection and mercy" (Al-Rum: 21)

The emotions like love and mercy are emotions which cannot be analysed in terms of material or rational criteria. People love their mothers, sisters, wives and friends. All these emotions are not the same; they cannot be so. But they can not be put in different compartments; they can not be calculated mathematically.

Unfortunately, lust can do away with all these good emotions. That is what the commercial culture does today. It develops lust in man. In the process, all good emotions such as love, and mercy fade away from his mind which becomes a waste land. In this situation a culture emerges which takes into account loss and profit only. Fareeda becomes an amazing human being, in this context.

There are low of human beings who devilishly calculate whether their children would be a source of loss or profit, twenty years hence and then make a decision to have children or not. In such a situation,

where humanity is degraded beyond words; how can Farida's case be judged, applying the criteria of materialism? Such are really amazing characters!

Thinking about Fareeda – Basheer couple we realised immortal springs of love still exist around us. Mr. Rasheed (Trichur) permitted the couple to occupy his flat in Calicut when Basheer had to undergo treatment. Mohamed Koya regularly hosted them by sending food prepared at home. Mr. T.K. Hussain was always prepared to extend any help and Mr. Abdurrahman, (advocate in Tellichery) honoured this writer's advice to contact Basheer and console him. They are all such eternal springs of love and mercy.

I have written so much about the couple to convey the message that rays of goodness still exist and we should not miss them; though there are cynics who insist that our world is uniformly bad and the society has gone astray beyond repair.

When I visited the hospital (two days before the death of Mr. Basheer), he was alive with the help of ventilator. I found Fareeda by him, praying to almighty for his life. She was not tired serving him for the past 18 years! Fareeda asked me to call him so that he could open his eyes. Her request still echoes in my ears! Certainly there are no yardsticks by which we can measure the supreme sacrifices flowing from self realisation!